

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. An editorial, i.e., a clear, straightforward statement of choice or preference, made in a format recognizable as such, by staff, management, or ownership of a program, or station is considered to be fair practice. However, political infomercials, disguised or presented as objective statement of fact offered in the public interest as background material made available to aid and enable the voting public to make a sound judgment based on a comparison of fully disclosed merits and shortcomings of the candidates in contention, is a clear violation of the spirit and probably the legal limits of the license of the station airing such material.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.